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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of teachers and their relationship with university researchers in collaborative educational research. Three models of collaboration are examined, literature on collaborations is reviewed, and preliminary findings regarding the effectiveness of an alternative collaborative model are presented. A review of reports on research projects that were labeled "collaborative" suggests that equitable collaboration between teachers and university researchers is problematic. One reason is that, generally, each partner has a different primary goal. The proposed alternative model of teacher-researcher collaboration, which was implemented in 1991-92, is based on a research team that had two distinct components: the school teachers, and the university researchers. Both groups had as their goal the better understanding of how teachers use representations (e.g., questions, examples, analogies, and metaphors). The university researchers were engaged in doing case study research, and the teachers were engaged in collaborative action research. There are complications built into this model and other complications that arose during implementation. These complications have contributed to the results of a preliminary analysis of data on the model which indicates that the model is not achieving its goal. (IAH)

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DRAFT

Models of equitable collaboration between university researchers and school teachers

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This paper arises from observations that I made at the annual meeting of AERA held in Chicago, Il in April, 1991. That was my first time at a meeting of this association, and my first opportunity to see teachers in the role of presenter at a meeting of educational researchers. What I saw I found disturbing, but it was not clear to me what was the cause of my uneasiness. This paper, and a related one that will be appearing in the *International journal of qualitative studies in education*, is an attempt to discover what it is that is problematic about relationships between university researchers and school teachers that are labelled "collaborative."

Types of research relationships

What types of research relationships exist between university researchers and school teachers? Houser (1990) has identified three roles of teachers in educational research:

- teachers as minimally informed (and often reluctant or ambivalent) participants ...
- teachers as collaborative participants ... and
- teachers as researchers (Houser, 1990, 55).

The first role is one of more traditional research where the teachers' work, their classrooms, or the teachers themselves may be the focus of university researchers. In the third role, as I see it, teachers take the leading role, setting the research agenda, and using university researchers as consultants to aid them with their inquiries. It is the second role, that of a collaborative relationship between university researchers and school teachers that I want to look at in more detail. In doing so, I will examine three models for collaboration, review my conclusions

from a review of literature on collaborations (Feldman, in press), and present some preliminary findings re a collaborative model that I have proposed.

Definitions of collaboration

A quick look in a dictionary finds a definition for collaboration which arises from the roots of the word — to labor together. This is a generic definition that includes all of the ways in which two or more people can work together to accomplish some sort of task. This is a definition that is often applied in practice, and appears in the research literature. For example, Clift and her colleagues at the University of Houston have defined collaboration as "the explicit agreement among two or more persons to meet and accomplish a particular goal or goals (Clift, Veal, Johnson & Holland, 1991, 54)."

A second, more restrictive definition has been given by Tikunoff, Ward, & Griffin:

> ... collaboration is viewed as teachers, researchers, and trainer developers *working with parity* and *assuming equal responsibility* to identify, inquire into and resolve the problems and concerns of classroom teachers. Such collaboration recognizes and utilizes the unique insights and skills provided by each participant while, at the same time, demanding that no set of responsibilities is assigned a superior status (emphasis in original) (1979, p.10).

Both the more generic form of collaboration and this more restrictive one result in benefits for the teachers. They include:

> 1) increased prestige among their peers;
> 2) the opportunity to have meaningful professional dialogue with other adults;
> 3) the feeling that their work is valued; and
> 4) compensation for their time — a stipend or honorarium for their participation which "pays" for a small portion of the time that they put into the research project.

In addition, the model presented by Tikunoff *et. al.* encourages equity and discourages hierarchal relationships by requiring that the collaborators work with parity and assume equal responsibility. However the clause "identify, inquire into

and resolve the problems and concerns of classroom teachers" does raise an additional question by placing primacy on the goals and objectives of the school teachers. The university researchers are asked to set aside their goals for those of the school teachers and are placed in the roles of benevolent educators who must altruistically serve those who are in need — the school teachers.

By focussing solely on the needs and concerns of the school teachers, there is no guarantee that the research will aid the university researchers in attaining their goals, such as the generation of propositional knowledge or publishable papers in refereed journals. This is no less problematic than if the research is directed towards problems identified by the university researchers alone, and putting secondary the utility of the findings of the research for the school teachers. From this it can be seen that it is important to urge that the research not only "identify, inquire into and resolve the problems and concerns of classroom teachers" but that it also meet the particular goals of the university researchers if the relationship between university researchers and school teachers is to be equitable.

Therefore for a collaborative research relationship between university researchers and school teachers to be equitable, further restrictions must be placed on the model. An equitable collaboration becomes one in which the collaborators

- work with parity,
- assume equal responsibility for problem identification, data collection, analysis, and report writing,
- share the same set of goals, and
- needs are met.

I have argued elsewhere (Feldman, in press) that because of the difference between the sets of goals for university researchers and school teachers, equitable collaborations are not possible. That is, although both university researchers and school teachers share the same ultimate goal, the improvement of schooling, the more immediate goals of the two groups differ dramatically. The university

researchers choose to generate a particular type of knowledge — generalities that go beyond the particularities of time and space, and can be stated in propositional form. This goal is independent of the type of research and is not a question of qualitative versus quantitative methods. The university researchers assume (and hope) that this knowledge will be of use for school teachers, but the immediate and short term goal of the university researchers is to build the scientific knowledge base for teaching.

In contrast, the immediate and short term goal of school teachers is to improve their practice. Therefore, the type of knowledge that they generate is highly contextual and dependent on place and time. What they discover "works best" is dependent on the school, the class, the student, and when the teaching is occurring. This is not to say that teachers are not interested in gaining a better understanding of their practice and their educational situation. The goals of the university researcher are of interest to school teachers, and their findings can be of use. However their goals are secondary, not primary, for the school teachers.

Even if the collaborations are not equitable, teachers do gain from them. Tikunoff and Ward (1983) and Lieberman (1986) have identified significant benefits for teachers and schooling. These include:

> 1) a greater likelihood that the results of the research will be used by teachers;
> 2) a greater likelihood that the research will better represent the complexities of educational situations;
> 3) the time between the initiation of the research project and the use of the findings will be reduced, and it matches the time lines of schooling better than large-scale funded research;
> 4) it encourages reflection and the taking of action by teachers to deal with the "messiness of teaching and schooling problems;"
> 5) it encourages collegiality among teachers;
> 8) it provides opportunities for teachers to assume leadership positions and fosters the empowerment of teachers; and
> 9) it helps to legitimate teachers' practical knowledge among university researchers.

However if these research relationships are to approach equitable collaboration it is necessary for all the actors, university researchers and school teachers alike, to "unpack" the roles that each plays. If the research is guided primarily by the interests of the university researchers, this should be made known to the school teachers. If any immediate benefits for the school teachers are only incidental to the research program, this too should be made clear. University researchers should be aware that teachers time constraints are very different from theirs, and while teachers might enjoy working with researchers and share their interest in gaining a better understanding of educational situations, school teachers have a job to get down — teaching their students — and their immediate concern is how to do this in a way that maximizes their students' learning without making themselves into martyrs.

It also means, as Kyle and McCutheon have pointed out in their analysis of collaborative research, that it is necessary to "consider whether collaboration is necessary, appropriate or even desirable for all research questions (Kyle and McCutheon, 1984, 177)." There are educational problems that can be researched without the aid of teachers and removed from the context of schooling. Research on learner cognition is certainly an example of this. On the other hand, university researchers need to remember that the opposite is also true — there are educational problems that can be researched without the aid of university researchers. Some of the examples lie in the realm of practical problems of pedagogy and curriculum development.

In summary, if an equitable collaboration is to occur, the relationships between university researchers and school teachers must be examined in order to unpack their complexities such as the differences in goals, settings, and social status. In addition, enough time and effort has to be devoted by the university researcher to the project so that trust can develop between the researchers and the researched. Finally, attention must be paid to Goodson's (1991) caveat that we are

asking teachers to collaborate on research on themselves where they are most vulnerable — their own teaching.

Problems in collaboration

I have reviewed a number of research reports that their authors have labeled as "collaborative (Feldman, in press)". One of the projects was of a single university researcher studying the work of a single teacher, three projects were examples of experienced teachers enrolled in in-service masters degree programs working with university researchers, a fifth was of a collaborative research and development effort, and in the final project, school teachers were employed by a university as half-time researchers.

In my analyses of those reports I found several problematic characteristics. First the lack of teachers playing an initiating role in the research. This was clear in two of the projects, the study of Hall's teaching by Grant (Grant & Hall, 1991) and the CCC Project (Oakes, Hare, and Sirotnik, 1986). In the three projects where teachers were enrolled as students in the university researchers' institutions, there was an implicit awareness that the research was determined by the constraints of the graduate program and the university researchers' interests (Johnson, 1990; Taylor, 1991; Gitlin, 1990).

Second, all of the projects which consisted of teams of university teachers/researchers and school teachers/graduate students were susceptible to the effects of the hierarchical teacher-student relationship. Given that there are good reasons for establishing and encouraging those sorts of relationships, such as training teachers to be reflective practitioners or including research on teaching as part of teacher education programs, it is important to make the existence of this hierarchy explicit if the collaboration is to be more equitable.

A third problem was the way in which the teachers' voices were represented in the reports. Johnson (1990) made the problem of whose voice is presented in the report explicit in her analysis of her project by noting the strength

of the university researcher's voice and the possibility of it drowning out the school teacher's. While this was not the problem in Grant and Hall's paper since each voice was clearly identified, there was an inequity in terms of the roles each voice played in the report. Two of the authors, Taylor (1991) and Gitlin (1990) while encouraging equitable collaboration in multiple ways, continued to report their "collaborators" work in the way in which researchers refer to their subjects. If the relationship is to be equitable, the equity cannot disappear when the university researcher presents his findings. In this can be found the continued assumption of the compartmentalization of education into the worlds of the researcher and the researched.

And finally, there was an indication that the relationship between the university researcher and the school teacher became one of dependency with the school teacher seeking from the university researcher confirmation of his or her importance as a teacher (Grant & Hall, 1991; Johnson, 1990; Oakes, Hare, and Sirotnik, 1986). It is possible that what I called a dependency was in fact signs of an interdependency between the university researchers and the school teachers which might have lead to increased school teacher autonomy. However my concern is that as a result of these interactions, the school teachers appeared to be in positions where they were seeking validation, instead of, or in addition to the insights and skills of the university researcher.

A different model for collaboration: Collaboration through separation

The analysis that I have just summarized has led me to propose a third model for collaboration between univeristy researchers and school teachers (Feldman, in press). This model has been implemented during the 1991-92 academic year as part of Shulman's current Spencer Foundation sponsored research project on teacher knowledge. The research team has been established as two distinct components: one composed of school teachers and the other

composed of university researchers. Both groups were given as their goal the better understanding of how teachers use representations — "a wide range of models that may convey something about the subject matter to the learner: activities, questions, examples, and analogies, for instance (McDiarmed, Ball, and Anderson, 1989, p. 194)." These representations can also be metaphors, stories, and other forms of narratives.

The university research group is engaged in doing case study research of teachers work and how they create and use these representations in their work. Their mode of operation, their methodology and manner of analysis, fits well within the range of traditional educational research. The teachers are using a significantly different form of research, that of collaborative action research. I selected this methodology and introduced it to the teachers because of my awareness of the inordinate number of tasks teachers have as part of their teaching duties, and my awareness that just like university researchers, they have their family lives and their involvement in their wider community. Therefore I concluded that it was important that the research be imbedded in that which they were already doing and not be an additional burden.

My assumption was that by separating the teachers and researchers into two teams, their immediate goals as well as their methods could differ. The university researchers could focus on their goals, that of generating propositional and case knowledge and case knowledge about teaching, while the school teachers could focus on their immediate goals — the improvement of their practice and their gaining a better understanding of their educational situation.

In theory, this research design comes close to meeting the definition of equitable collaboration. Each group agreed to accomplish the same ultimate goal; i.e., to better understand teachers use of representations. Teacher-researchers and university researchers have equal responsibility and parity because their parts of the projects are separate. In addition, by separating the groups, each had the

potential to meet its own immediate and short-term goals without compromise or the establishment of a hierarchy of service.

Complications in implementation

Theory is not practice, and there are complications that are built into this model and other complications that have arisen over the course of the academic year. The first concerns my place in this project. I have multiple roles in this collaboration model — as a researcher in the Shulman group, a facilitator of the teachers' group, and as a conduit between the two. As a researcher in the Shulman group, I am studying the ways in which teachers develop and use representations. As a facilitator of the teachers' research group, I am in the role of Elliott's "reflective teacher-educator (Elliott, 1988, 163)." That is to serve as a facilitator for the physics teachers group and do second-order action research on my facilitation. It is in connecting the two parts of the research that I have a third role, that of the *neutral broker* (MacDonald and Walker, 1977).

As the academic year has progressed, I have identified two other roles. The fourth role is that of a researcher of teachers engaged in action research. This role has developed as it has become clear that the work that I am doing with the teachers will be the focus of my dissertation. And the fifth is that several of the teachers see me as their colleague because of the my 14 year career as a secondary school physics teacher. In effect we share a common language and are a part of a larger community.

A second complication is that this design falls short of equitable collaboration in an important aspect. The research project originated within the university research group and the teachers were then asked whether they would like to be a part of it. Even though the questions being asked relate specifically to the physics curriculum and the way in which the subject matter is understood by students and teachers, the teachers had no hand in framing the original problem statement.

A final complication relates to the realities of the difference in social status, job description and expectations between the teachers and university researchers. Although at this time the teacher-researchers have had no contact with any university researcher other than myself, these issues have been of importance. It is the teachers who have responsibility for what happens in their classrooms, and their days are structured so that they have little time for engaging in research activities of the sorts in which university researchers are engaged.

The current status

It is not clear at this time how all of this is playing out. What I can say, based only on a very preliminary analysis of my data, is that this model is not achieving its goal. The teachers are not acting as if their primary inquiry is the way in which they develop and use representations. Instead they have turned their attentions to a major discrepancy in their practice — the gap between their goal to encourage their students to develop a conceptual understanding of physics on the one hand, and their students' identification of physics as mathematical problem solving on the other. In response to this the teachers have begun to explore different forms of pedagogy and assessments instead of looking at the ways in which they represent subject matter.

This has not been a result of a rebellion. During the past year the teachers and I have engaged in many hours of critical conversation as we have attempted to understand what it is that constitutes teacher research, teacher knowledge, and the ways of warranting that knowledge. The goals of the Spencer project have been hovering around the meetings, sometimes discussed explicitly, and at other times pushed aside, but for the most part not regarded as the immediacies of practice have moved the teachers' attention away from researching their practice in order to enlarge the "knowledge base."

What of my part in the teachers move away from the outsider agenda? Again I must note that at this time my findings are quite preliminary, but it does

seem that I have been fulfilling my obligation to the teachers in my roles of facilitator and second-order action researcher. As facilitator I have helped them to identify their goals without trying to convince them that the outside agenda was necessarily more important in terms of their contribution to a knowledge base of teaching or in terms of its usefulness to them. As a second-order action researcher I have paid careful attention to my actions, observing the effects of those actions, and planning new ones in order to improve my facilitation. And, I have paid attention to the ethical concerns of the neutral broker. There are still the obligations that I have in my role as university researcher of teachers' representations and as a researcher of teachers' research. These can be met without turning the teachers' attentions and efforts in those directions by my engaging in outsider research, that is for me to research their practice both as teachers and researchers as an outside observer.

At this time it appears as if this model of collaboration by separation has not been successful in this project because of the outsider research agenda. It might have been more successful if the two teams had met to negotiate a common research agenda, but I fear that would not have been any more successful because of the difference in the concerns of school teachers and university researchers. What would probably be more successful would be for university researchers to either set aside their concerns in order to help school teachers with their inquiries, or for them to help make more explicit the difference in roles when school teachers help university researchers with their work.

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